

DETAILED ACTION

Examiner's Amendment

01. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with David Rook on November 05, 2009 (see the attached Interview Summary).

The instant Claims have been amended as follows:

- Claim 6: A user preference search system for searching a knowledge base to find a match answer and an alternative answer for a search term, comprising:
a search engine stored on a computer system, comprising a processing unit, that performs a first search at a first location in the knowledge base and returns a match answer, and performs a second search at a second location in the knowledge base to find an alternative answer, wherein the alternative answer belongs to an alternative answer category determined by inputting a look-up association into an alternative answer probability table, wherein the look-up association is based on a search history table; and
a table update system that updates the alternative answer probability table based on a table of previously determined category answer associations.

Reasons For Allowance

02. Claims 1 – 15 have been considered and deemed allowable. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

It is the examiner's opinion that the art of record considered as a whole, alone or in combination, neither anticipates nor rendered obvious the specific search engine taught by the Applicant. The Examiner finds no single prior art reference teaching of a search engine that searches in a (random) location for a single match answer and determines a second category for searching for another match answer in a second (random) location, by way of a look-up association and search history table as recited in independent claims 1, 6, and 11. A thorough search of the prior art reveals the primary reference Bowman et al. (US Patent 6,006,225), which was previously used to reject the claims. Bowman discloses a similar method in that search engine searches for answers to a query and suggest related terms to allow the user to refine the search. However, Bowman does not disclose performing a second search to locate an alternative answer which belongs to a second category determined by an alternative answer probability table, which is based on a search history table. Therefore the Examiner believes that the independent claims, as amended, stand in condition for allowance over the cited prior art. Dependent claims 2 – 5, 7 – 10, 11 – 15 and are also believed to be in condition for allowance over the cited prior art for at least the reason listed above.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably

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accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

03. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Christopher Raab whose telephone number is (571) 270-1090. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 6:00pm.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Pierre Vital can be reached on (571) 272-4215. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free) or 703-305-3028.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist/customer service whose telephone number is (571) 272-2600.

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Christopher Raab
C.R./cr

November 05, 2009

/Pierre M. Vital/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2156